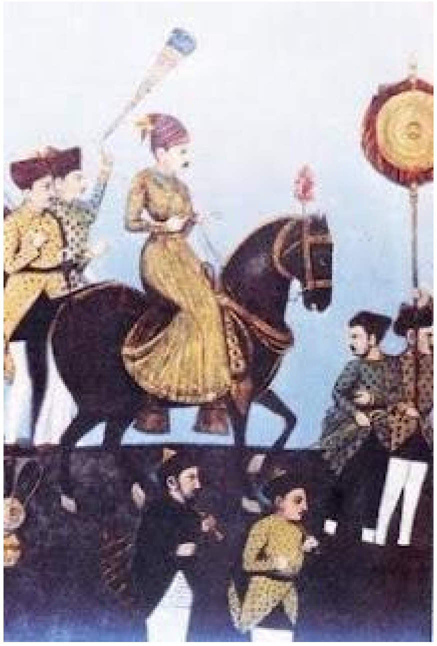
Chatrapati Rajaram



Chatrapati Rajaram Bhosale was the youngest son of Shivaji. He was born on 1661 at fort Raigad.
When his elder (half) brother, Sambhaji was executed by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, Rajaram was under house arrest (at the orders of his brother, after his mother Soyrabai had tried an unsuccessfull coup against Sambhaji). However, after Sambhajis execution, the Marathas felt a need for unifying ranks against the mughals.
After the coronation of her infant son Shahuji as the next king, Sambhajis widow Yesubai asked for the immediate release of Rajaram . She also magnanimously requested Rajaram to be made the Regent.
In 1689, a traitor by the name of Suryaji Pisal, who was the killedar of fort Raigad, surrendered the fort (along with Queen Yesubai and infant king Shahu) to the Mughals. Rajaram was then at fort Vishalgadh.
With both the Queen mother and the young king being taken away captive by the mughals , the Maratha ministers (like Ramchandrapant Bavdekar,Prahlad Niraji,Khando Ballal Chitnis,Hanmante, etc) felt the need for an immediate succession in order to fill up the leadership vacuum. Rajaram was soon declared as the next King in 1681.
Rajaram has been described as a person with a congenial demeanour , flexible in his approach and accomadative towards one and all. He wasn’t a warrior in the real sense like his predecessors, but was nevertheless able to evoke the loyalty in his men.
Rajaram departed from his fathers policy of not granting 'chauth and sardeshmukhi' rights to his nobles. It can be said that he was compelled to do the same to match up with the wealthy Mughals who were buying away the loyalties of the various Maratha nobles by granting them lands and feifs.

Rajarams wives
Rajaram was married to Jankibai the daughter of Prataprao Gujar, secondly to Tarabai the daughter of Hambirao Mohite and thirdly to Rajasbai ,from the family of Ghatges of Kagal.

Victorious battles during Rajarams rule
Rajarams resistance to the mughals was carried forward by his two commandants , Santaji Ghorpade (son of Sarsenapati Mhaloji Ghorpade who was killed in the skirmish at Sangamehwar which led to the capture of Ch.Sambhaji) and Dhanaji Jadhav (the cousin of Ch.Sambhaji and Ch.Rajaram, hailing from the Jadhav family of Sindhkhed from where their grandmother Jijabai also hailed. Note, Dhanaji was brought up by Jijabai herself after his father Sambhaji was killed in the battle of Pavankhind. Earlier Sambhajis father Santaji Jadhav was also brought up by Jijabai after Achloji Jadhav, Jijabais brother was assasinated in the Ahmednagar court along with her father).
Santaji had on one occasion(1689) even conducted a daring raid into the mughal camp at Tulapur, where Aurangzeb himself was staying. Aurangzeb had then managed to escape with his life.
Sept 1689.Mughal commander,Sheikh Nizam routed by Santaji Dhanaji at fort Panhala.
25th May 1690. Sarzakhan aka Rustamkhan defeated and captured by Ramchandrapant,Santaji,Dhanaji at Satara.
1692, Rajgad (led by Shankar Narayan Gandekar), Panhala(led by Parshuram Trimbak) recaptured by Marathas.
8th Oct 1692, Dharwad in Karnataka was captured by Santaji Dhanaji.
14th Dec 1692, Santaji defeated Alimardan Khan and took him captive to Jinji.
9th Jan 1693, Santaji defeats and captures Ismailkhan Makha, Janisaar Khan for ransom.
5th Jan 1693, Mughal camp at Desur looted by Santaji Dhanaji.
21 Nov 1693 Santaji defeats Himmat Khan.
1693, Sidhoji Gujar , the Sarkhel or Admiral, captured the naval forts of Suvarnadurg and Vijaydurg.
Note:after Sidhoji Gujar, the mantle of Sarkhel was passed on to the famous Kanhoji Angre.1693, Vishalgad was retaken by Parshuram Trimbak.
July 1695, Santaji traps mughal army at Khatav.
20th Nov 1695, Qasim khan is killed by Santaji at Doderi.
1699, Parsoji Bhosale of Nagpur,Haibatrao Nimbalkar,Nemaji Shinde,Atole along with Rajaram overwhelmed the Mughal force at Godavari valley.
Dhanaji Jadhav defeated a mughal contingent at Pandharpur.
Shankar Narayan cleared another contingent led by one Sarzekhan near Pune.
But later Santaji fell out with Rajaram. Dhanaji Jadhav attacked Santajis force. Many of Santajis men deserted him and Santaji was isolated and managed to flee. He would have escaped if not pursued (July 1697), by one Nagoji Mane, who bore a grudge against Santaji for having killed his relative on an earlier occasion.When Santaji (having felt that he had shaken of Dhanajis men) dismounted from his horse to cleanse himself in the river, Nagoji beheaded him.

Rajarams ministers
Following were Rajarams ministers: Nilo Pant Pingale (son of Moropant Pingale) the Peshwa or Finance Minister,Janardhan Hanmante (son of Raghunath Hanmante ex governor Jinji) the Amatya or Finance minister ,Ramchandra Bavdekar the viceroy of Maharashtra,Shankar Malhar

Nargundkar was the Pant Sachiv or Accountant General,Shamji Pinde was the Mantri or Home minister,Shrikaracharya Kalgavkar was the Panditrao or chief priest,Mahadji Gadadhar was the Sumant or Foreign minister,Niraji Ravji was Sarnyayadhish or Chief Justice, Santaji Ghorpade(later Dhanaji Jadhav) was the Sarsenapati or army commander in chief, Parsoji Bhosale became governor of Berar, Nemaji Shinde the governor of Khandesh,Khanderao Dabhade the governor of Nasik.

Rajarams escape to and from Jinji (Gingee),Tamil Nadu

Aurangzeb was determined to crush the Maratha resistance. For the same, he had himself encamped in the Deccan with a huge force. Due to continuous Mughal onslaughts, Rajaram escaped in 1689, to Jinji in Tamil Nadu (a fort captured early by Shivaji). From there he continued with the Maratha struggle until the fall of Jinji in 1698. Rajaram managed to escape the clutches of the mughals led by Zulfikar Khan.

Death

But his life was cut short because of illness in 1700. He died at fort Sinhagadh near Pune. Rajaram left behind two sons and one daughter, Shivaji by Tarabai, Sambhaji by Rajasbai, daughter Soyrabai by Jankibai. His youngest wife Ambikabai whose only daughter had died attained Sati. There was also said to be an illegitimate son Raja Karna (from a mistress Sagunabai).

War carried forward by Rajarams widow, Queen Tarabai

Rajarams feisty wife Tarabai took over the reins of the Maratha army and continued the resistance against Aurangzeb, until the release of Shahu (son of Sambhaji and Rajarams nephew) from the mughal prison. What followed was a brief power struggle for Maratha leadership between Tarabai and Shahu, which was eventually won by Shahu.
Shahu was declared king with Satara as his capital.